



## South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



# WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA CEREMONY

Major General Tim Reisch, Adjutant General of the South Dakota National Guard, served as the keynote speaker at the Wreaths Across America ceremony in Pierre on Monday.

Wreaths Across America's mission is to remember, honor, and teach. Remember the fallen. Honor those who served and are currently serving, including their families who sacrifice. Teach our children the cost of freedom we enjoy each day.

This program was coordinated by the South Dakota Funeral Directors Association.

Other partners assisting with the program were Lynn's DakotaMart,



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KCCR Radio, Isburg Funeral Chapter, American Legion Post Chapters 8 and 20, and VFW Post 2038.

Maj. Gen. Reisch and Teresa Bray, Deputy Secretary of State for Administrative Services, placed the wreath.

SDDVA Field Officers Kevin Bowen and Kevin Swanson attended on behalf of the Department.

## PEACE AND HAPPINESS

It's that time of the year when we are busy decking the halls, shopping, wrapping presents, writing cards and letters, baking, visiting our loved ones, and attending holiday programs and concerts.

South Dakota has a proud history of military heroes and as we approach the holiday season let us not forget the service to this country that has spanned the generations. Let us not forget the families of current and past soldiers, as they also endured a great deal while loved ones were deployed.

When I hear songs like: I'll be Home for Christmas, Santa Bring my Baby Back to Me, Peace in the Valley, Blue Christmas, Time for Me to Come Home; I can't help but think about all of those that will only be home in their dreams. For military families with a deployed service member, the holidays require a little extra love and a little extra creativity as kids and adults alike cope with missing a family member.

Prompted by patriotism, the great comedian Bob Hope toured for more than fifty years entertaining our troops. From World War II through Vietnam to the Gulf War, this legendary comedian traveled the world visiting our heroes. It was a collaboration that forever linked the names "Bob Hope" and "the USO," giving a new visibility, respect, and recognition.

Humanity, caring, commitment, support of the troops — that was the mission of the USO, it was Bob Hope's goal and it is also the goal of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Although we have no stage, no lights, and our team isn't on the front lines; we are committed to helping veterans and their families.

I'm proud of the force of experts that we have working at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. Collectively, our state veterans service officers, field officers and education personnel have over 200 years of military service. They have worn the boots, walked the trenches, conducted maneuvers, commanded troops, sustained missions and protected our freedoms. They are veterans that have borne the battle and are committed to ensure that our heroes receive the highest quality services possible.

Our primary mission is to advocate with purpose and passion for South Dakota's veterans and link them to superior services, benefits, and support. Our team is at the forefront of the most demanding challenges confronting our state's veterans, whether they are veterans from the World War II generation, the Korean War, Vietnam, the Cold War, or veterans who most recently served in support of the War on Terror.

Like Bob Hope and the USO, for our team, it truly is a privilege and an honor to serve our veterans and their family members.

We wish you and your family a blessed holiday season and a new year of peace and happiness. As you and your family gather this holiday season, please keep our heroes, past and present in your hearts. God bless our veterans, their families, and our troops that are currently serving in harm's way.



Larry Zimmerman, Secretary  
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

## NEW REGULATION DECREASES COST OF OUTPATIENT MEDICATION COPAY FOR MOST VETERANS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is amending its regulation on copayments for veterans' outpatient medications for non-service connected conditions. The VA currently charges non-exempt veterans either \$8 or \$9 for each 30-day or less supply of outpatient medication, and under current regulations, a calculation based on the medication of the Medical Consumer Price Index (CPI-P) would be used to determine the copayment amount in future years.

"Switching to a tiered system continues to keep outpatient medication costs low for veterans," said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. David J. Shulkin. "Reducing their out-of-pocket costs encourages greater adherence to prescribed outpatient medications and reduces the risk of fragmented care that results when multiple pharmacies are used; another way that the VA is providing better service to veterans."



This new regulation eliminates the formula used to calculate future rate increases and establishes three classes of outpatient medications identified as Tier 1, Preferred Generics; Tier 2, Non-Preferred Generics including over-the-counter medications; and Tier 3, Brand Name. Copayment amounts for each tier would be fixed and vary depending upon the class of outpatient medication in the tier.

These copayment amounts will be effective February 27, 2017:

- \$5 for a 30-day or less supply - Tier 1 outpatient medication
- \$8 for a 30-day or less supply - Tier 2 outpatient medication
- \$11 for a 30-day or less supply - Tier 3 outpatient medication

These changes apply to veterans without a service-connected condition, or veterans with a disability rated less than 50 percent who are receiving outpatient treatment for a non-service connected condition, and whose annual income exceeds the limit set by law. Medication copayments do not apply to former Prisoners of War, catastrophically disabled veterans, or those covered by other exceptions as set by law.

Copayments stop each calendar year for veterans in [Priority Groups 2-8](#) once a \$700 cap is reached.



## VA NATIONAL CEMETERIES NOW OFFERING PRE-NEED ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it now provides eligibility determinations for burial in a VA national cemetery prior to the time of need. Pre-need eligibility determinations will streamline access to burial benefits that veterans have earned through military service for themselves and their eligible family members. Pre-need eligibility determinations will help veterans and their families with pre-need burial planning.

"A pre-need burial eligibility determination will confirm an individual's eligibility for burial in a VA national cemetery prior to the time of need" said Black Hills Cemetery Director Adriene Benton. "I encourage veterans and their spouses to take advantage of the new program so they have peace of mind and can address burial plans ahead of time."

Interested individuals may submit [VA Form 40-10007](#), Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery, and supporting documentation, such as a DD Form 214, if readily available, to the VA National Cemetery Scheduling Office by: toll-free fax at 1-855-840-8299; email to [Eligibility.PreNeed@va.gov](mailto:Eligibility.PreNeed@va.gov); or mail to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office, P.O. Box 510543, St. Louis, MO 63151.

The VA will review applications and provide written notice of its determination of eligibility. The VA will save determinations and supporting documentation in an electronic information system to expedite burial arrangements at the time of need. Because laws and personal circumstances change, upon receipt of a burial request, the VA will validate all pre-need determinations in accordance with the laws in effect at that time.

The VA operates 135 national cemeteries and 33 soldiers' lots in 40 states and Puerto Rico. More than 4 million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA's national cemeteries. The VA also provides funding to establish, expand and maintain 105 veterans cemeteries in 47 states and territories including tribal trust lands, Guam, and Saipan. For veterans buried in private or other cemeteries, the VA provides headstones, markers or medallions to commemorate their service. In 2016, the VA honored more than 345,000 veterans and their loved ones with memorial benefits in national, state, tribal and private cemeteries.

Eligible individuals are entitled to burial in any open VA national cemetery, opening/closing of the grave, a grave liner, perpetual care of the gravesite, and a government-furnished headstone or marker or niche cover, all at no cost to the family. Veterans are also eligible for a burial flag and may be eligible for a Presidential Memorial Certificate.

Information on VA burial benefits is available from local VA national cemetery offices, from the Internet at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov), or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at any open VA national cemetery at the time of need, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.



## WELCOME HOME CAITLYN

SDDVA State Veterans Service Officer Caitlyn Zylstra has returned to our Sioux Falls after a three month sabbatical.

Caitlyn was training for her new position within the Air National Guard. As a Maintenance Management Analysis, she monitors, collects, assembles, and audits data for reports and briefings. In her new position she also initiates special studies and investigations and performs statistical analysis on flight data. Their data is used to create recommendations to benefit the fleet. In addition, her team manages information systems and performs functional system administrator duties.

Caitlyn's training took place at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, TX.

She officially returned to work on December 12th and we are excited to have her back at the Department.





## HOLIDAY FOR OUR HEROES

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs staff and our County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers donated food for the Holidays for our Heroes Food Drive.

The Operation Engage America Holiday for our Heroes resource Fair was held December 13 in Sioux City, IA.

SDDVA's Erin Bultje delivered the food and manned the SDDVA booth. This is a great opportunity to guide and educate veterans on the benefits and programs available to them.

Special thanks to all of those that contributed to this great cause!!!!



*Holiday*  
**FOOD DRIVE**

## OGLALA LAKOTA VETERANS OPPORTUNITY WORKSHOP



SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman was one of numerous state and federal partners that provided the welcome at the Oglala Lakota Veterans Opportunity Workshop in Rapid City this week. The focus of the workshop was to showcase business, employment, and homeownership opportunities for Oglala Lakota Veterans and to share information about federal, state,

and tribal veterans benefits, resources and contacts.



## SHIOWX FALLS SOLDIERS WELCOMED HOME FROM KUWAIT

Thirty-eight soldiers from the South Dakota Army National Guard's 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade were welcomed home by family and friends at the Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls, Dec. 14, after returning from duty in Kuwait.

The Sioux Falls-based unit returned home in time for the holidays after a 10-month deployment where the Soldiers conducted security, force protection and base life-support operations at several installations in the country.

"I've got four kids at home so this is going to be a big surprise for them," said Capt. Bracken Robinson. "I can't wait to get home and see them. It's very important to be able to spend the holidays together."

U.S. Senators John Thune and Mike Rounds, along with Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG, were in attendance to welcome the soldiers home.

"We're blessed to live in the greatest country in the world - and it doesn't happen by chance - it happened by service," Thune said. "Your hard work, loyalty, dedication, skill, talent and experience are brought to bear when we send you out - deploy you - into various places in the world to defend America's freedoms."

The ceremony concluded with Lt. Col. Douglas Bopenhagen, mission commander, giving thanks to the soldiers, family members and supporters in attendance.

"Your support provided us the courage and determination to meet and exceed all of our mission requirements," Bopenhagen said. "Your thoughts and prayers energized our efforts on a daily basis. Our friends, families and employers are the true heroes and the reason we truly wear this uniform - and proudly wear this uniform."

"We returned healthy, united, proud, and satisfied that our mission was completed to the best our ability."

The Kuwait deployment completes the second mobilization for the 196th since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The unit first deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2010-2011.





# Upcoming Events

## 2017

Jan. 10 - Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)  
Jan. 11—SDDVA/Veterans Council Legislative Reception—5:00 pm—8:00 pm (CT)  
Jan. 12—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—American Legion Post 8—Pierre—9:00 am (CT)  
Jan. 30—VFW Legislative Reception—AmericInn—Fort Pierre  
Feb. 1—American Legion Legislative Reception—American Legion Post 8 Cabin—Pierre (520 S. Pierre Street) - 5:30 pm (CT)  
Feb. 4—Valentines for Veterans Concert—Sioux Falls Washington Pavilion—3:00 pm (CT)  
Feb 10-12—SD American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Oacoma  
April 19—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)  
Jun 15-18—SD American Legion State Conference—Watertown

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